

## "A Padre in France"

By GEORGE GORDON.

SIGNING himself G. A. Birmingham, Canon Hannay has at various times amused and delighted a world of readers with tales of *Spanish Gold*, *The Major's Niece* and various Irish types. Now, having given his time for the past two or three years as a chaplain in convalescent and concentration camps behind the lines, he recounts his experiences, *A Padre in France*. The book holds nothing new or never said before and is interesting primarily for what it tells of Canon Hannay—not at all a plain spoken person, rather the charming and always trying to be helpful vicar of Meredithian novels.

"They say," he says, "that a lawyer sees the worst side of human nature. A parson probably sees the best of it; but though I have been a parson for many years and seen many good men and fine deeds, I have seen nothing more splendid, I cannot imagine anything more splendid, than the comradeship, the brotherly love of our soldiers."

Yet in his book the soldiers serve rather to fill the background; they do not dominate the scene. This has been a war of superlatives. And Canon Hannay, who rushes to no extreme, who is always uncomplaining, doing his little best, unemotionally going about his duties, good natured, seems a little faint in his praise. "Hard things," he tells us, "have been said about R. A. M. C. orderlies and nurses. Perhaps they have been deserved occasionally. I saw their work at close quarters and for many days in one place, nowhere else and not again there; but what I saw was good." This seems little enough by way of thanks to men and women who through long months, night and day, with scant equipment, accomplished the impossible. They wounded themselves are not so chary of words.

Then, too, the ease with which his conscience accommodates itself to keep silent before the massed brutalities of war. I expected something as valiant, as anxious to keep straight the way, as hopeful for the dawn, as young Donald Hankey's *A Student in Arms*. I find the padre remarking that "the best battle story I ever heard from the lips of a soldier . . . was a rich mixture of blasphemy and obscenity." And again of the bishops, deans, priests, who visited the camp with other distinguished persons: "Ecclesiastics were dull. They evidently considered it bad form to allude to religion in any way and they did not know much about anything else."

There is very little about religion in Canon Hannay's book. I looked for something concerning the thought of the man about to go up into the battle area, of the man returned from the front desperately wounded. Not a word. A description, witty and easy to read, of Channel voyages, of Madame with whom he was billeted at his second camp; of M., a neighboring chaplain, of "leave" and a soldier's delight in holidays, of the daily round, the mud, the inconvenience, the desperate efforts of every one to be of service. A pleasant tale.

A PADRE IN FRANCE. By G. A. BIRMINGHAM. George H. Doran Company. \$1.50.

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RUPERT HUGHES  
"AUTHOR OF 'CUP OF FURY'"

## D'Aurevilly the Diabolist

By BENJAMIN DE CASSERES.

THE lid is lifting. Not the alcoholic lid, but the literary lid. Mars has pried the top off. Beneath, Continental literature is taking a squint at America, and we, on the other hand, are beginning to display a healthy curiosity about the great writers of the continent that produced man-sized literature. Russia, France, Italy, Spain and Belgium are no longer only the picnic grounds of the Chicago tourist. Their lives have heretofore been rounded in a Baedeker.

To the left, the famous Steppes, ladies and gentlemen; to the right, Paris, home of Louis the Fourteenth; to the south you will perceive Italy, janitor of the Coliseum and Pompeii, which you have all heard about; that is Spain, where the Alhambra—and so forth.

This is passed. The Continental masters are being translated and eaten a l'Americaine—all in a lump, en casserole, scrambled. But though we get indigestion of the wit and develop a cerebral corporation, the thing is good. It sounds the knell of the Great British Literary Superstition. It will result in a second declaration of independence—this time against the literary oligarchs of Oxford and Cambridge. James Huneker and Edgar

gar Saltus were right—there are men in Continental Europe who can write as well as Emerson and a little better than Macaulay!

There was Barbey D'Aurevilly, for instance. Among Americans he is probably the least known of the great French writers of the last century. The Louis Library, which is doing such splendid work in translating great prose masterpieces from the French, has just published D'Aurevilly's *The Story Without a Name*, translated and introduced by Edgar Saltus.

A beautiful literary combination—D'Aurevilly and Saltus. It is Ritz-Carlton fare served in plates of jade by nuns in red. It is like reading the Book of Job with an introduction by Thomas à Kempis, or Don Quixote, with a foreword by Hamlet. I believe that Saltus could have done all that Barbey did; but that Barbey could not have done what Saltus did. Saltus's sense of humor is so catastrophic that it swallows up hell; Barbey's sense of hell was so acute that it swallowed up Barbey. Saltus can kid the Furies, Josh Parabrachma, and loop-the-loop with the Eternal Return; but Barbey—supremely great artist that he was—is always doing the fee-fi-fum stuff with priests and sleep walkers, erimson curtains and human hearts (in one of his stories in *Les Diaboliques* husband and wife play parlor baseball with a child's heart).

As George Moore is a Frank Harris who can write, so Barbey D'Aurevilly played Boswell to Satan. He was the observed of all on the Boulevards. He always appeared, in his curious Beau Nash get-up, between the 5 o'clock absinthe and the overture to "The Bohemian Girl"—(is there one? Maybe it is "Fra Diavolo" I was thinking of). He wrote tremendous thrillers in a garret for Stendhal's limited edition of human beings—the Apperceptive Eight, scattered throughout the world in all time, who spend their years on psychological Battery benches scanning the arrival of a Leviathanful of ahead-of-the-times geniuses.

D'Aurevilly's *Les Diaboliques* are starkly horrible. They dish up the depths. After reading them you are hell proof. If Poe, D'oe, Hoffmann and Baudelaire ever meet in the cenacle of the tomb, they will probably elect Barbey D'Aurevilly, if not president of their club, then chief angel bouncer. He had monstrous ideas and mirific words in which to embed them. He took the serpents from the heads of

the Furies and put them into magnificent show cases on the Boulevard—he meanwhile headed for a Duchess.

"The Story Without a Name" is one of his greatest masterpieces. A town buried in the mountains—the Pit of the human heart and the Pendulum of fatality above it. A priest, a girl who is a somnambulist, a religious mother, a baby born of the priest and the sleepwalker, the suicide of the girl—pins in the heart and the reversion of the priest to type—steft and other incidentals of human nature. But no bare outline of the story can give any idea of its power, its stark, inhuman terror, its atmosphere of unwholesome damnation. Succubus is the heroine and an Immanent Iago the hero.

The introduction by Edgar Saltus was done with a diamond dipped in ichor.

THE STORY WITHOUT A NAME. By BARBEY D'AUREVILLY. Brentano's.

## Ed Harmon Back on the Mound

FOR thousands of readers who smiled or chortled audibly over the military adventures of the erstwhile ball player Ed Harmon in *From Baseball to Boches* there will be joy in the news that H. C. Witwer has given us more glimpses of Ed's career in *A Smile a Minute*, which is something less than the laugh-producing percentage of the new Ed Harmon book.

In the "First Inning" we learn that Harmon, who "joined the thing as nothin' but one of the chorus, but now they give me a speakin' part," has been made a Second Lieutenant of the A. E. F. (which is interpreted here as Ain't Ed Fine) and causes much consternation among his late comrades over his efforts at enforcing discipline before he gets his uniform.

One may pass over lightly the chapters describing a visit to a dentist and the buying of a second hand automobile and reserve our humorous appreciation for the last chapter, where Ed gets back into the national game again as "The comin' dictator of baseball." Only, where the Cubs made eight runs off his pitching in the game that sent him into the army, they got nine in the first game he pitched when he came back from it. *A Smile a Minute* may not be a very important book, but it is full of good contemporary humor, agreeably compounded of war and peace, and suggestions from Ring Lardner. If it doesn't make you laugh we are sorry for you.

A SMILE A MINUTE. By H. C. WITWER. Small, Maynard & Co. \$1.50.



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